

# OtherWise

A Feminist Newspaper at U of T

Volume 2, Number 4, 21 January 1986

Remembering



Mary Fan Tchunki  
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The Archbishop of Managua, Cardinal Obando y Bravo, during a visit to San Marcos, Nicaragua.

## Taking Affirmative Action

by Renate Schoep

"The gender organization of the university is part of how it gets its work done," says a report, The Future of Women at the University of Toronto, which was recently produced by the Ad Hoc Committee on the Status of Women. For the past year, the two year old committee has devoted much time to developing recommendations that would improve the situation of women at the university.

The report starts with a feminist analysis of the university as a patriarchal institution. Traditionally, men have had careers, women's work has been secondary to that. Female students haven't expected to have careers and thus haven't prepared for them, just as women workers have been relegated to

dead-end jobs. Although some things have changed, the university, as most institutions, is still a place of male dominance.

Inequality at the university is not just a matter of attitudes or discrimination with respect to hiring, giving tenure or student admissions. The report alludes to the fact that most people think of the university as gender-neutral, and that inequalities arise from bias. However, the report stresses that the issues at stake are more complicated and that our daily working relationships are sustained by an unequal gender organization. For example, women's childbearing years often coincide with an important time in their educational career. The male life

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## Rights, Rites, Right: Gay and Lesbian Leadership in the United Church

By Gillian Hodgerson

"Gay people are being asked to choose between relationships and church community, between human companionship and love of the church. Don't ask me to choose."

Christine Jaymark was a student at the Vancouver School of Theology, and a candidate for the ministry in the United Church of Canada. She's a family therapist and mother to four children. Christine is also a lesbian.

In October 1983, Christine was told by members of the committee that would assess her as a candidate for the ministry that there were rumours that she was gay. She and her partner, Robin Kennie, attended their Vancouver neighbourhood church regularly and seeing them together it's obvious that they love each other very much.

Christine says she felt she had three options when she was confronted by the committee: to lie, "but what kind of ministry is based on a lie?"; to say it was none of their business but she "didn't want to be uncooperative" and personal questions are not unusual in these circumstances; or to tell the truth—which she did. Forty-five minutes later, she was dropped as a candidate for the ministry.

I met Christine and Robin at the United Church General Council meeting in Yorden, Manitoba in August 1984. They and the other members of Affirm, the organization for lesbians and gay men in the United Church of Canada, had come to the council meeting to try to provide information to councillors (called commissioners) as they debated whether or not to accept a recommendation that homosexuality not be an impediment to being ordained.

In March 1982, the Executive of

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## MORE OTHERWISE...

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A NEW LOOK

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## From The Collective

We could not write an editorial about women and religions. It's far too big and complicated, so, the following is excerpted from a discussion we held. It suffers an imbalance because of the agnostic majority of the collective. We invite believing feminists to respond.

F: Is there a need for religion?

N: Religion is a system of beliefs; the way you see the world and how you live your life. There's a need for that, no matter what you call it. People need a sense of order, even if it's out an organized system.

K: Then why do we call it religion not science or philosophy, those things also attempt to explain the world's questions and mysteries.

J: It's a spiritual thing rather than scientific and logical. I don't see how religion can be separated from philosophy. Different philosophies serve to help different people strive for the things they want in life and achieve the kind of life they want to live. Religion varies according to what a particular person wants to rationalize.

E: But that's yuppie religion! Surely religion is a comfort in life's travails - not an aid to success. It helps you make difficult moral decisions.

T: Most people do choose a system of beliefs whether it be feminism, Buddhism, Christianity, or whatever. It's what is implied by a system of beliefs that makes it different. If you've chosen Christianity as your system, then Faith is your priority.

R: Isn't religion concerned, to some degree, more with the metaphysical, with explaining our existence on earth? Thus it is very different from, say, a philosophy of feminism which deals with the relationships between men and women and sexual oppression.

K: Do we believe that the world can only be explained through rational and

material means?

All: No!

R: Things happen that you can't explain rationally, forces that can't be quantified.

K: That says, for me, there's an opening for the existence of a spiritual element in life. But I don't believe that necessarily entails organized religion.

H: We want to make sense of life. Religions seem to be different systems doing that; different ways of taking the parts and ordering them to make up one's concept of the world.

K: But the way that works in each society varies.

E: Yes, because it is socially determined. When you start ordering things you don't do it out of the blue. You learn by the way things are around you. If you live in a society that is organized in a hierarchical way, then you will believe that God must be thought of in a hierarchical way too.

J: It's the difference between living under God's reign and living "at one" with your spiritual "leader", be that God or Nature, or whatever else you may choose.

K: If we believe that no one religion is completely natural or innate, then we have to see that religion is a function of a culture and is historically constructed.

A: Let's face it, people give themselves order. Religion isn't there without minds. We give ourselves order and then we place religion within it. I can't see how religion could come before and organize us because it's nothing without people on earth.

E: But many people believe that things like the Bible and the Koran are the word of God and do come before us.

A: Yes, but they've been recopied and translated over and over again, women should realize that when they place so

much faith in organized religions. These institutions have been created by men and are products of the times--abortion yes, then abortion no; the Pill yes, Pill no--it's absurd. The church varies with the times and with what men think.

R: Exactly. Because Christianity is a cultural-historical phenomenon, it naturally has taken on the dominant values of our society. Therefore, women in Christianity have been subjugated to men.

E: Yes, organized religion, possibly because it figures so strongly in one's ethnic identity, has been the justification of endless wars, from the crusades, to Northern Ireland, to the conflict between Islamic Arabs and Israeli Jews.

K: But back to women, when we talk about women's liberation or feminism, we're talking about a predominantly western Judeo-Christian understanding of how women fit into society. That's going to be completely different if you go to Asia.

Perhaps feminism is based in atheism. My interpretation certainly is as it has a Marxist base.

H: But not all Marxists are atheists and I don't want to think that if I'm a feminist it necessarily entails that I'm atheist.

T: No, no! We make what we want of it. If there's a God in your vision of feminism, you have to have a certain relationship with it which is not traditional.

A: We're all educated and we live in the age of science; there are still so many things we don't understand about our lives, about the way we interact with the world. We still seem to need a giant explanation.

J: The idea that there is someone "up there" who is omnipotent and all-knowing does not provide enough reassurance for me. The questions still haven't been answered and I think we must acknowledge the possibility that certain issues will remain mysteries forever.

OW

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## From Our Readers

Dear OtherWise:

As OtherWise "bills itself as an alternative newspaper on campus, I dared to hope for higher standards of journalism than can be found in certain other papers. In Lisa Cormier's article "Racism or Ethnocentrism?", however, you have adopted the all too common attitude of not letting the facts get in the way of a good story (or, as in this case, lead.)

Yes, indeed, the OEO is the bible of English students like myself. (I even joined the Book of the Month Club to get it.) Ms. Cormier bases her entire lead on her claim that neither the word "racism" or "ethnocentrism" appear in the OEO, and that this indicates, to a large degree the "attitude of English scholars generally." This is a serious claim. It is also untrue.

Unable to believe such glaring omissions in my beloved OEO, I looked past the main volumes (set in approx. 1910) to the more recent supplement (which I suspect Ms. Cormier, for the purposes of her article, found it

convenient not to.) In the supplement, the word racism does indeed appear. The first reference is to the French "racisme," used first in 1935. The first recorded English use of the word was in 1936. Thus, it is misleading to accuse the publishers of the OEO of implicit racism because it denies the existence of the word, for the main volume was set before the word existed.

The same is true, if Ms. Cormier cares to look for herself, of the word "ethnocentrism."

The OEO has always had a word synonymous with racism: "racialism," for which the definition is identical to our modern sense of "racism." At no time did the publishers of the OEO deny that the concept of racial prejudice existed.

On a more serious and fundamental level, I must disagree with the analysis of the "ethnocentrism" festering in English department because of its limited offerings. Most the students myself abhor translations, and would be uninterested in a course which offered only literature in translation.

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# Re-encountering the Blessed Virgin Modern Madonnisms

by Helana Van Nooten

The Virgin Mary is not other one of the average feminist's personal heroes. Feminists have pointed out, quite correctly, that the figure of Mary is a patriarchal possession, an impossible ideal used more as a reproach against all other women than as a liberating example. As well, Mary has always been most visibly associated with the Catholic Church, and the Catholic Church is not noted for its close association with feminism.

The tensions between a Catholic upbringing and a feminist ideology can be quite severe. The easiest choice by far is to drop either the Catholicism or the feminism. There are some women, however, who continue to work within the Catholic Church, struggling to bring about change in the roles and identity of women in the Church.

Mary Malone, a Catholic theologian living and teaching in the Toronto area, is an example of a feminist working within the Catholic Church. Her recent book, which is *My Mother*, subtitled *Rediscovering the Mother of Jesus*, is an historical look at the political and theological images of Mary, and a rediscovery of the actual scriptural figure of Mary. The book is written more for the Catholic confused by

the abrupt shift in attention away from Mary after Vatican II than for the feminist.

But feminist considerations are an integral part of the book, which in effect, reclaims the figure of Mary for women by separating the actual scriptural Mary from the images of her that have been created and accumulated over the centuries.

AS I grew older, the emphasis on Mary's purity and virginity simply served to increase my suspicion that, if you were a woman, the Church was only interested in your sexual status.

Growing up in the post-Vatican II Church, I escaped the heyday of Marian devotion, when Catholics organized themselves into the Legions of Mary and Blue Armes. My image of Mary relied mainly on plaster statues, which still clutter the hallways of many Catholic schools.

I can also remember my mother telling me that Mary, as a consequence of being born without original sin, was naturally good and was never tempted to sin. As a child who was always guilty of some minor sin (swiping cookies, for one), I came to the private

conclusion that Mary must have been an unutterable bore. As I grew older, the emphasis on Mary's purity and virginity simply served to increase my suspicion that, if you were a woman, the Church was only interested in your sexual status.

Malone's book is perfect for dispelling the highly negative images of Mary that clutter the minds of Catholics and non-Catholics alike. Her historic exploration of the shifting images of Mary is a fascinating look at the power of symbols or images that can both reflect the changes in society and be used as tools to maintain the status quo. The images of Mary reflected the changing concerns and needs of believers, male and female, and at the same time enforced an increasingly negative stereotype for women. So the peasant woman who found in Mary an image of her own life of poverty and suffering -- another woman who knew what it was like to work hard and to suffer the loss of children -- was at the same time taught that to be like this woman she also had to be submissive, silent, and chaste.

After having explored the historical images of Mary, Malone gives us the scriptural witness to Mary. The image of Mary found in the scriptures is quite different from those found in history. The submissive, passive, eternally virgin and crisis Mary is not substantiated by the scriptural references to her. She appears to Malone as a model of human discipleship, much more than of virtuous womanhood.

Malone feels that a new devotion to Mary will arise "when women have reclaimed and refashioned their own self image." But she also feels that this new devotion to Mary cannot occur until the Catholic Church commits itself to improving the role of women in the Church.

Malone has decided that Catholicism and feminism are reconcilable, something which some feminists and indeed some Catholics believe is impossible. From this assumption, she goes on to explore the more subtle tensions inherent in the most prominent female figure of the Catholic Church, with great sensitivity, and awareness of modern feminist views. **OW**

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## Liberation Theology: Religion Takes Sides

by Laurie Bell

On a recent tour to the United States Bishop Desmond Tutu of South Africa told a congregation where he was preaching, "If you don't think God takes sides, go talk to Pharaoh." His reference to the Exodus story of the Hebrew Scriptures points to the very principle of liberation theology. The account of the Israelites fleeing slavery under Egyptian rule is the archetypal image for a theology of liberation.

Liberation theology has come to us from the countries of Latin America, where most people have always had two things in common—being poor and being Catholic. While traditionally the Catholic church has handed down theology and religious instruction from above, in the late 1960's, Latin American Christians began the practice of reading scripture from the perspective of the oppressed experience. Norma Gale, a Nicaraguan woman who became deeply involved in the revolution as a Christian, recalls, "We didn't know it was called anything. Liberation theology is just the name they gave to what poor people were already doing."

Campeños (peasants) throughout Latin America often have access to only one book: the Bible. They simply begin in



Oscar Romero, Archbishop of San Salvador, advocated for the poor.

small groups, to read together. Pharaoh, they noted, looked a lot like Somoza. They felt much like the Israelites. And of course they noted something different from what they had traditionally learned in Church—God didn't want people to be slaves and even assisted them to become free. God takes sides and God always sides with the poor and oppressed.

This fundamental insight, though it may seem simple, has radically changed the course of history for the peoples of Latin America. Increasingly the poor have been motivated by their faith to engage in the revolutionary process, rather than being held back by religious dogma. Liberation theology brings one's reality and faith together, so that in Nicaragua they saw the Christian faith and the revolution there is no contradiction.

Because it is based on the premise that theology begins with assessing our reality, liberation theology has been the tool by which many of Latin America's poor have been politicized. Its impact has been felt globally as well. For many North American Christians, being held back by religious dogma to identify our oppression as women, blacks, immigrants, gays, lesbians and to realize our solidarity with other oppressed peoples.

Liberation theology has had an incredible effect on the very institution of the Catholic Church. For a church that has traditionally preached liberty for the oppressed and practiced exploitation of the

oppressed, as in Latin America, politicized Christians present a challenge. From our own lived experience, we have identified the church itself as one of the sites of our oppression. The poor and oppressed are calling for not only political institutions but also the church itself to move from duplicity to integrity, from charity to justice. Black slaves in the southern U.S. wrote and sang gospel music about liberation. This was certainly a seed of liberation theology. They sang:

Who's that yonder dressed in red?  
Must be the ones that Moses led.  
Oh, Mary don't you weep don't you mourn,  
Pharaoh's army got drowned  
Oh, Mary don't you weep.

Today, keeping the spirit of that struggle one might sing instead:  
Who's that yonder dressed in red?  
Must be the ones Mandela led.  
Oh, Mary don't you weep don't you mourn,  
Both's army got drowned  
Oh, Mary don't you weep. **OW**

Letters...continued from Page 2

Translations are either a joy to read, but woefully inaccurate, or loaded with notes and a chore to read, though they be impeccably accurate.

The problems that authors

in emerging literatures from third world face is the same faced by new Canadian authors: there is very little really new writing studied at the university -- even in so-called "modern" literature courses. Again and again we are fed the same old standbys, and must look

further afield to periodicals to find the pulse of new talent.

It is also untrue to say that none of this third world English language literature is studied. In my first year English course, I studied the excellent Nigerian playwright Wole Soyinka. The experience

was made all the more worthwhile by the fact that the professor for the course had lived in that country for several years himself, and was able to give us valuable insights into the more "ethnocentric" references in the plays, as well as

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# Towards Reclaiming Islam

by Aisha Geissinger

Islam means "submission to the will of God", and also "peace." Those who accept to so submit are "Muslims." In Islam, the goal of existence is to serve God. Serving God is done not only through prayers or other rituals, but also by any action done with the intention of pleasing God, whether work, study, or political action. Thus, God-consciousness is at the heart of the Muslim life, and for women to be equal to men they must have the opportunity for spiritual development. Also, it is believed that people who have not been educated of the evil details can be a danger to society, especially if they hold responsible positions. Therefore, for women to take part in society, they must develop spiritually. Islam does give them this right, although they have often been unjustly denied it.

The worth of men and women alike stems from their God-consciousness, and this is the basis of their equality:

"Whoever does good, or whether male or female and is a believer."

"...We will certainly make him for her; live a happy life and we will certainly give them their reward for the best of what they did." (Qur'an 16:97)

Islam is based on the concept of God as one, with no partner or son, who is unlike anything. God is never referred to as "father." God is beyond gender. God refers to Himself in the Qur'an using both male and female names. Masculine pronouns are used, but also the names "al-rahman" (the Beneficent) and "al-rahim" (the Merciful). Both names come from the Arabic for "womb", and are repeated often in the Qur'an. Nothing is considered worthy of worship, and no unquestioning obedience except God—not husbands, employers, fathers, heads of state, or the American president. This is a message of dignity for both women and men.

Muslims believe that God sent many prophets to guide people to the way, and that the Prophet Muhammad was the last of them. It is a matter of controversy as to whether or not there were any female prophets; some classical commentators on the Qur'an, such as Razi, opined that Hajar was a prophet, whereas others was or not; the Qur'an states that her spirituality, bestowed a prophet of the time, (Zakariya see 17:7). She is mentioned in the Qur'an as all believers to follow (56:11-12).

The revelation of the Prophet Muhammad did not come down all at once, but bit by bit. Women and men played a rather participatory role in the revelation; they would come to the Prophet with their questions and problems, and God would reveal an answer. In one incident, a Muslim woman, Umm Habiba, came to the Prophet and asked him why the Qur'an did not speak about women.

Some time later, the verse was revealed in answer:

"Verily the Muslim men and the Muslim women, and the believing men and the believing women, and the truthful men and the truthful women, and the patient men and the patient women, and the humble men and the humble women, and the giving men and the giving women, and the fasting men and the fasting women and the men who guard their private parts

and the women who guard (their private parts) and the men who remember God much and the women who remember God much—these, the forgiveness and a great reward has been prepared." (Qur'an 33:35)

The Qur'an has many fine examples of inclusive language. In another incident, a woman came to the Prophet complaining that her husband had divorced her unjustly, and verses were revealed prohibiting this type of divorce (58:1-4). The revelation, then, was responsive to the needs of women as



Aisha Geissinger

well as men and addressed both sexes. Incidentally, these examples prove that women can demand their rights.

Muslims relate to God on one hand, and to the community of believers on the other. This community extends from the dawn of human history, into the future. The experience of God is direct and requires no intercessors; however, the examples of pious men and women, especially, from the time of the Prophet Muhammad, are also important in Muslim spirituality. They show what it is to live God-conscious

life. One such example is the Prophet Ibrahim, who broke the idols of his tribe and declined to worship them. Some Muslims have translated his example into modern terms and advocated resistance against the "super powers" of the idols of our time. Providentially, the examples of both women and men are embedded in Muslim ritual, so that women's empowerment must be part of the worship of all Muslims. This has been so since the time of the Prophet Muhammad, however, male-dominated some Muslim societies have been, as the basic ritual forms came from God through the Prophet and are unchangeable. This has provided and continues to provide women with a woman-positive spirituality. Two obligatory rituals to illustrate this point are the pilgrimage (Hajj) and the five daily prayers.

In the pilgrimage, the pilgrims, whether male or female, perform the same rituals, side by side. They reenact incidents from the lives of Hajar, Prophet Ibrahim, and their son, Ismail. These holy persons are examples for all Muslims to follow.

One important rite is the running between two small hills outside Mecca, al-Safa' and al-Marwa. This is in memory of Hajar's search for water when she was alone in the desert with her infant son. Hajar is a model of active, practical faith. She looked as she ran for water. She also had practical knowledge and acted upon it: a good place to look for greenery is at the foot of the hills. Through divine guidance, she found a spring, the Zamzam, which still exists today. Pilgrims still drink from it.

Another rite is the

circumambulation of the Kaaba, or stone cube building which houses the famous Black Stone. This circumambulation is a symbol of how the soul should love God the center of his or her life. However, Hajar's grave is also there, and a circumambulation is not ritually correct or acceptable for women, unless it encompasses Hajar's grave as well. Some say that Hajar's son is also buried beside her. No one has the right to be buried in the Kaaba, to which Muslims turn as they pray. However, she was so pleasing to God that she was buried there.

The five daily prayers are recited by women and men, and are the same for both. One portion of the prayer, the *fatihah*, asks, "Guide us the straight way, the way of those upon whom you have bestowed Your grace..." These people are the prophets, martyrs, truthful and righteous men and women. Incidentally, the first martyr during the mission of the Prophet Muhammad was a woman, Ummayyima. Muslim pray to be guided on the way of the exemplary men and women who preceded them. In another part of the prayer, the *tasbeeh*, blessings are invoked upon the families of the Prophets Ibrahim and Muhammad. At this time, Muslims remember these people, including women such as Hajar, and Fatimah Zahra, the learned and politically active daughter of the Prophet Muhammad.

Male theologians have tended to be uninterested in these female examples, and have concentrated on the male ones. However, as Muslim women become more aware, many are rediscovering these female examples, and others as well, which space does not permit mention of. Indeed, Muslim men of belief encompass both female and male examples.

## Feminism and Judaism: Can They Co-Exist?

by Carole Cooper

It is not easy to be a Jew and a feminist. The conflicts between Judaism and feminism often seem irreconcilable and it is difficult to find a balance between the two. The traditionalists will argue that women are not subservient or valued less than men within Judaism and that the strict gender role differentiation allows them to be "separate yet equal." However, closer examination reveals that this is not the case. The male patriarchal religions and cultures, has been created and dominated primarily by men, the norm being equated with male experience and imagery. Men are the focal point of Judaism, whereas women, although considered important, are relegated to more peripheral roles and viewed only in terms of their relationship to men. This is clearly evident in the mitzvot (divine commandments) and the halakhic laws (laws of the written Torah and oral tradition). While most mitzvot apply equally to men and women, some are specific to each sex and others have a gender bias.

Male activities are given more recognition; only men have a role in law-making and priestly functions. Women are barred from priestly functions and have been traditionally denied access to the halakhic law-making process. They are not taught religious texts, such as the Talmud (the book of codified Jewish laws except where the laws apply to them as homemakers, as in the case of the laws of *hashruth* (the

Jewish laws). In fact, the majority of oral laws equates teaching women Torah with licentiousness.

The male preference in Judaism is further illustrated in the Talmudic text which states, "Woe to him who has female children. A daughter is like a pig, she is fattened (Sanhedrin 100b). The birth of a son is announced with the rituals of circumcision and if he is the first born, a pidyon hasfen is performed. The first-born from Temple service). A newborn daughter is practically unnoticed, except for a brief naming ceremony in the synagogue.

One of the most outstanding examples of female "otherness" within the religion is the law of *niddah*, purity associated with a woman's menstrual cycle. During a woman's period and five days after it, she is considered ritually impure. However, her impurity is only defined in terms of her husband, with whom she is intimate. She is still free to cohabit with other men, and she cannot transfer her impurity to others. A menstrual woman, a *niddah*, is still considered ritually impure and for this reason she is barred from public ritual and worship and designated a more peripheral role.

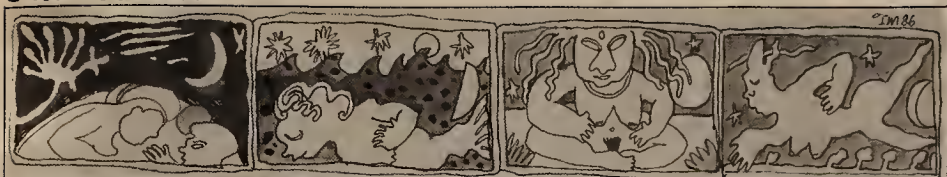
Practices such as the ones mentioned above are at odds with the feminist concept of women having control over their bodies and lives. Traditionally Jewish women who live within the halakhic system are not free to make choices about their lives and are defined in

terms of their relationship to men.

Regrettably, the halakhic process has failed to come to grips with issues that concern emancipated Jewish women today. Sexual violence, rape, ritual equality and leadership. Halakhically, a woman cannot divorce her husband. She can only ask him to give her a divorce. In this time of rising divorce rates, among the Jewish community there is a growing concern about the husband who refuses to grant her a divorce. She becomes an *agunah*, a "grass widow," and she is not free to re-marry within the community.

However, change is occurring, albeit slowly. As women become more empowered in the secular world, imbalances between traditional Jewish values and those of the rest of society will have to be corrected. Groups are starting to form in Canada and the United States that are trying to reclaim traditional Jewish women's rituals and leadership. The language such as the laws of a *niddah*, ceremonies for a newborn daughter, and in prayer and study. The number of women practicing their integration in Jewish learning is growing and non-existent language in English translations of prayer books is beginning to become more prevalent.

If Judaism is going to survive, it will have to come to grips with feminism. The process of their integration is exciting and it can only strengthen and revitalize the faith.



Ingrid MacDonald

## Bring Down the Patriarchy with . . . Women's Spirituality

by Kate Lazier

At the Michigan Women's Music Festival had the pleasure of overhearing two women talk about moving into a new apartment. They said that the previous tenants had left a lot of "boy energy" and that they were planning a ritual to rid the dwelling of the "testosterone poisoning". It must be a joke, my friends and I assured ourselves, stifling our critical laughter.

In the United States and to a lesser extent in Canada, there are a growing number of feminists engaged in exploring and defining what is becoming known as "Women's (or Women's, Women's) Spirituality." At Michigan I saw the evidence: there were workshops on auras and crystal healing, at the "Womb" a sick woman could choose between herbal remedies and traditional white man's medicine, and in the craft area she could buy the tools of her spiritual trade. I did not respond favourably; I was uncomfortable with the notion that feminists could or should "reclaim" their "privileged" connection with the earth and things spiritual. And I complained that women's oppression was not going to end because we can get in a circle and hold hands. But, my curiosity was piqued and I decided to find out what this was all about.

It becomes very clear in reading some of the texts on women's spirituality (see bibliography) that spiritual feminists have many different approaches and philosophies. But most seem grounded in the neopagan tradition, and particularly in the "Wicca" religion, commonly known as "witchcraft" or simply as "the craft". The craft is distinct from the major western religions in a number of ways. The deity, for

example, is not separate from the world, governing over it, but is the world and the connection between all things. The deity is thus immanent in all of us and all of nature. There is no authority figure, no concept of sin, and sexual expression is seen as an expression of the divine. It is through rituals and meditation that the Witch (anyone who practices Wicca) tries to break through the alienation of the modern technological age to "reconnect" with the god/dess in nature and in other beings. In doing so, witches seek inspiration in pre-Christian religions and various (usually European) folklores and mythologies.

To the discontent of some of the more conservative traditional practitioners of the craft, feminists are developing their own rituals and resurrecting mythologies that reflect their interest in creating a symbology which includes images of strong, capable women. Nor have feminists limited themselves to European myth. Women of colour like Audre Lorde and Sabrina Soyedner have recovered positive female figures in the religions of the Ibo and Bantu tribes in Africa. Some feminist spiritualists are attracted to the idea of matriarchies. In her book, *The First Sex*, Davis posits the ancient existence of matriarchies. These were destroyed when men, exiled from the matriarchies, banded together and overthrew them to create—*you guessed it*—patriarchies. However, the historical accuracy of this theory is hotly disputed by witches and academics alike. For this reason many witches prefer to think of matriarchy as an ideal of society, not necessarily found in history,

in which women have power and where power is not used to oppress.

Many feminist spiritualists see their spiritual practice as a kind of self-help program. Hallie Lighart and others see ritual and meditation as a means of developing self-confidence and "personal power". Thus, it is argued that a woman will be more effective in the "real world" of politics if she has developed clarity in her spiritual world. Witches also maintain that through physical and psychic self-awareness women can avoid most sickness. When, however, witches do become ill they can use numerous holistic healing techniques to recover.

Similarly, feminist witches like Starhawk criticize this culture's strict segregation of mind/body and material/spiritual. She sees that the spiritual and the material are intimately connected and that the constantly give rise to each other. To deal with this, feminists should work in both realms and should attempt to integrate them. Others like Sally Gearhart disagree and argue that political strategies that are based in the material world are futile and that real change can only happen through "resourcement", or the finding of a deeper, non-patriarchal energy source. This, I think, is very problematic—important change has happened by working in the material world and I'm skeptical that simply finding an "energy source" will win us the revolution.

Some feminist spiritualists like Judith Antonelli and Charlene Spretnak believe that women, unlike men have an "elemental" and special connection to nature, not only because they have the capacity

to give birth but also because they, run on "essence" lines. They think that men are essentially different from women and that the problem with the world is that femininity is denigrated. In this small, as everything "bad" is identified with maleness and patriarchy. Terms like "testosterone poisoning" and "boy energy" can be understood in this theoretical context. There are many difficulties in this framework. First, it suggests that all oppressions are the result of patriarchal power relations, when actual, class and race oppression, while connected to, are distinct from the patriarchy. Furthermore, although it is true that on this date January 12, 1986, in Toronto men are generally "different" from women, it is not clear that all these differences are innate.

Women have been oppressed for thousands of years on the basis of "essential" differences. How will prescriptions of masculinity and femininity, whether defined by men or women, be liberating? So while I remain sceptical of strategies that rely on notions of "boy energy" and "women's elemental" link with the earth, there is much to be said for a holistic view of humanity and nature and for reconciling the split between material and spiritual. But I still don't know what the crystals are for. . . . ON

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# Don't Touch That Dial - Born Again In North America

by Nancy Worsfold

Judith Haiven's Faith, Hope, no Charity: An inside Look at the Born-Again Movement in Canada and the United States is a remarkably charitable book. The book is charitable in that it is never harshly critical. It is a journey through born-again North America; A Washington for Jesus prayer, the Christian Broadcasting Network studios, Jerry Falwell and his "I Love America" rallies, and on and on through a very foreign world.

The book is neither specifically feminist, nor does the author dwell on the role of women in the born-again movement. Never-the-less the book is important to feminists because of the extremely right-wing, anti-feminist political stance of the born-again movement. For the most part, born-again oppose women's rights, abortion, birth control, sex outside of marriage, homosexuality, busing for racial integration in U.S. schools, some even oppose welfare, and most support large military budgets and are rabid anti-communists. While upholding their right to freedom of religion, feminists must fight the born-again's political agenda.

The strength of Faith, Hope, no Charity lies in the author's style, both in writing and research. Throughout her travels, Haiven seems to have maintained a low profile. Unlike the stereotypical reporter who wears a press badge and wields a tape recorder like a gun, she blends in with the crowd. Although she never deceives anyone, she is often mistaken for a convert or a potential convert.

Again and again the faithful try to help her find God and tell her of their experiences; "it was the wee hours of a Sunday morning" John recalled. "I had just come in from shooting some pool, but I wasn't drunk. I turned on the television, glad that Marina was in bed so I didn't have to talk to her. Ernest Angley was asking people in the studio audience to come forward to commit themselves to Christ. [Ernest Angley is a U.S. evangelist and faith healer.] Suddenly, he looked straight at me and commanded me to come forward and put my hands on the television set. I felt

God's presence run through me and I cried out for Marina...It was that night I dedicated my life to Christ and took him as my personal Saviour. I was born-again."

Conversion is key to being a born-again. Although, Haiven explores what happens after the re-birth experience, focusing on the amount of money people are willing to send to television preachers, she does not discuss the actual experience. Perhaps she avoided discussion of religious experience because she hadn't gone through it, but she left me thinking, as I did before I read the book, finding God while watching T.V. is just too weird for me to think about.

The born-again movement is very wealthy because of the monthly pledges extracted from viewers, mostly older single women, during television shows. The born-again do very little charitable work, the bulk of their income goes into buying more and more air time. Haiven interviewed most of the rich and famous leadership of the fundamentalists.

Although not all born-again are interested in right-wing politics, more and more are converting to political activism. In the sixties, Rev. Jerry Falwell preached against clerical involvement in politics. In his recent interview with Haiven, Falwell had obviously changed his tune: "The local church is an organized army equipped for battle, ready to charge the enemy...Christians like slaves and soldiers, ask no questions." Haiven documents, with painstaking precision, the political activities of the Christian New Right.

Rather than using so called "secular humanists" to comment on the born-again movement, Haiven consistently uses interviews with other religious people. For instance, rather than interviewing a liberal who had his political career sabotaged by right wing forces, she talks to John Buchanan, an Alabama Republican, Baptist minister and self-professed born-again. He was accused of being soft on abortion and welfare rights so the Moral Majority flexed its muscles and replaced him with a former Ku Klux Klan member.

In clear, precise prose Haiven outlines the absolutely terrifying assertions of the born-again. She is

Jewish. "You are one of God's Chosen People, did you know that? Dr. Falwell just loves the ground Jews walk on."

Some of the strongest American support for Israel comes from born-again. Falwell was even given an award for service to Israel by the right-wing Israeli former Prime Minister Menachem Begin. Many born-again preach that the formation of the state of Israel and the nuclear build up are part of a Biblical prophesy of the end of the world. In other words, a nuclear war would be a part of the second coming, and born-again, only born-again, will be safe because they have taken Christ as their Saviour.

Faith, Hope no Charity looks into the indoctrination of children - with and without parental consent. She tells the story of a young teenager who became caught up with the movement at a summer camp where she expected to learn hockey. Rather than strengthening "the family" she is told to expect to create hostility with her new found faith. On the other hand, born-again parents can send their children to Bible schools where they can learn to read using Bible stories and learn math with pie graphs which show a child giving 40% of his lawn-mowing money to the church.

Faith, Hope, no Charity is a Canadian book, written by a Canadian with a Canadian view point. The schools she visits are in Canada and she includes a chapters about our very own television evangelist David Iainse and our own right-wing political activist Ken Campbell. Campbell runs the "Way in" beside the Morgantaler clinic on Harbord Street and organizes the anti-abortion protestors who harass women going in and out of the clinic. A Canadian perspective is especially interesting in a movement which is so closely identified with American nationalism.

South of the border an evangelist proclaimed he believed God's promise to Abraham "also included America."

In her afterword, Haiven asks, "was I too easy on people who didn't deserve it?" Yes, she was too easy on people, but her efforts to be fair produced a powerful book. The criticisms which she leaves unsaid are filled in by the reader, which makes her case strong and clear. Christianity when robbed of its charitable base is very, very scary. OW

Judith Haiven, Faith, Hope no Charity: An inside Look at the Born Again Movement in Canada and the United States, New Star Books, Vancouver, 1984

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United Church, continued from Page 1

General Council--the governing body of the United Church--passed a motion giving the church's Division of Ministry, Personnel and Education the mandate to form a task group to develop guidelines for the church on the question of ordination for candidates who declared themselves to be gay. The committee met with members of the church, human rights groups, representatives of other denominations, theological scholars and members of Affirm itself.

On March 23, 1984 after much speculation both within and outside the church, the task group released their recommendation: "In and of itself, sexual orientation should not be a factor in determining membership in the order of ministry of the United Church of Canada."

With the release of the report, the battle had just begun for the members of Affirm. They had to convince many members of the church that they were not a bunch of outside agitators trying to undermine the structure of the church, but faithful members of the church who wanted to be considered on an equal basis with other candidates if they felt called to the ministry.

Clarke MacDonald, who ended his term as Moderator of the church at the Council meeting in Norden said, "Ordination is not a 'human

right'... it is an ecclesiastical 'rite.' No one has a human right to ordination."

This statement, delivered during debate over the task group's recommendations, further muddled the waters, and provided ammunition for those who wanted to see the report struck down. Bill Siksay, another member of Affirm and also a candidate for the ministry at one time, explained the group's position: "Affirm has never pushed for ordination on the basis that it's a human right. We're not asking for affirmative action. We're not saying that ten years down the road ten percent of ministers have to be gay."

Another factor in the debate at Norden was the presence of a group of "ex-gays", brought to Council members of the United Church Renewal Fellowship, a right-wing group committed to keeping gay people out of the order of ministry. The ex-gays presented a view of homosexuality as one long, irresponsible orgy of drugs, booze and disco dancing--attended by pathetic, lost souls who were incapable of forming stable, committed relationships or even true friendships. They claimed to have been "cured" of homosexuality through prayer and many people at Council urged the church to "help"

it a gay members by programmes of counselling and cure.

Bill Siksay had this to say of the ex-gays: "The whole ex-gay movement is based on a couple of misconceptions. The issue of life-style is divorced from sexual orientation. A lot of ex-gays talk about drug and

*The ex-gays presented a view of homosexuality as one long, irresponsible orgy of drugs, booze and disco dancing...*

alcohol abuse, rampant promiscuity. These things have caused problems in their lives and they needed to take action. So they swing radically to heterosexuality, the whole marriage package. It offers a lot of rules and structures."

It was suggested that perhaps gay candidates could be ordained if they would agree to remain celibate. But celibacy is not required of heterosexual clergy. The church even seems willing to turn a blind eye to sexual relations outside marriage in some cases. Yet, the church is not willing to consider allowing gay couples to marry either. Sexuality is viewed by the United Church as a gift from God, to be enjoyed. Or so says a 1982 report on human sexuality that was berated by members of the church as an enlightened, useful document.

In the end, the conservative forces won out. Council decided not to make any changes in the existing process of ordination, leaving gay candidates in sort of limbo. Gay ministers hadn't been banned outright, but they hadn't been accepted either. Ordination committees were instructed that it would be "inappropriate" to ask about a candidate's sexual orientation, but weren't given instructions on how to deal with a candidate who felt she or he couldn't stay in the closet. The church agreed to set up a programme to study the "sexual life-styles" of all its members and to consider this at the next meeting of General Council, to be held in 1987 or 1988 in Sudbury,

As a final blow, the Council refused to "affirm" the ministries of those lesbians and gay men who had already been ordained--who had either kept quiet about their sexuality, or, like Rev. Eilert Frerichs, chaplain at Hart House at U of T, come out long after ordination.

When the council meeting was over, Frerichs told reporters that he was "going home to my own gay and lesbian community in Toronto, where I feel a bell of a lot safer than in the United Church." OW

Affirmative Action, continued from Page 1

cycle is seen as the norm. Thus, as long as the university doesn't have a part-time Ph.D. program, it will be very difficult for women to do doctoral work and have children at the same time.

The Ad Hoc Committee gives a number of recommendations that concern the university as a whole. It proposes that a code be developed defining sexist and racist language, behavior and so on, as unacceptable in the university context. This could be used to deal with the sexist and racist practices that pervade the university, such as the sexist and racist jokes of certain campus publications. It also recommends that guidelines be set up to encourage the use of non-sexist language in order to counter the masculine language that is supposedly gender-neutral like the "inclusive" mankind. Thirdly, subsidized childcare facilities need to be provided for faculty, staff and students. Finally, a periodic review of the university's progress should be undertaken by the Status of Women Officer.

The report makes an extensive number of recommendations specific to the individual constituencies of faculty, students and administrative staff. For students, these include recruitment of women into non-traditional programs, establishment of teaching guidelines on sexism in the classroom, and the creation of an interdisciplinary Centre for Women's Studies which would function at both the graduate and undergraduate level.

Recommendations concerning administrative staff focus around the fact that women are disproportionately represented in lower level positions, and thus form a "female job ghetto" in secretarial and clerical work. Among other things, the Ad Hoc Committee proposes the appointment of an Affirmative Action Officer who would oversee a program with clear targets for recruitment, promotion and a timetable to measure its progress.

The gender profile of the faculty shows a disproportionate number of women in seasonal and non-tenure-track appointments. The report stresses that clear standards

for evaluation and guidelines for promotion are needed to avoid and combat gender biases.

Although the report seems to be well thought out and is extensively documented, there are a number of serious shortcomings. There is no mention of the concerns of union staff at the university, such as library workers, cleaning personnel and teaching assistants. The report also fails to address the specific needs of Black women, women of colour and working class women in the university context and thus makes the assumption that all women's needs are the same. Financial constraints still prevent many women from attending university. Michele Landsberg's recent article in the *Globe and Mail* describes how Hunter College in New York City has an open admissions policy and a more relevant curriculum which both have made the university more accessible.

The report by the Ad Hoc Committee carries no official status. According to Dorothy Smith, faculty member at OISE and member of the Ad Hoc Committee, the report will be presented to the President and to the Status of Women Officer Lois Reimer. What

will happen to the report next is unclear. Smith hopes that it will generate discussion and that the Administration will act on the guidelines set out in the report. Reimer agrees with the conclusion of the Ad Hoc Committee that "the university is a tougher place for women than for men," though it remains to be seen if she will respond concretely to the report.

If the U of T wants to get serious about the situation of women at the university, it will have to consider the report of the Ad Hoc Committee. Also, it will have to recognize how issues of race and class are important in considering the status of women at the university. These cannot be neglected, otherwise the future of women at the U of T will remain the future of a privileged group of women. The report by the Ad Hoc Committee is an important step in the right direction.

**OtherWise's  
Next Supplement  
is  
Feminism and the  
Left**



My Poh-poh (Cantonese for maternal grandmother) was named Fan Tchun-ai at birth. She was born in Hangchow, Chialing province, in the last years of Imperial China. The Fan family was a prosperous one. Poh-poh's father and brothers were merchants; one of them had passed the gruelling civil service exams and become a respected magistrate. They lived with their wives and concubines and children on the family estate in Foochow, the capital of Fukien province.

There were thirty-four children, half boys and half girls. Poh-poh, the daughter of a beautiful concubine, was Sister Fourteen. (In China girls are often called by the order of their birth instead of by name.) Several of her older siblings participated in Sun Yat-sen's Republican revolution, which overthrew the imperial Manchus in 1911, or became famous in other ways. Some years later, poh's husband would often boast of his wife's relatives. Her Brother Seven died in an early Republican uprising and was considered a hero. Another brother became a sort of lesser warlord, controlling an area near Canton. One sister went abroad to study art, married a fellow student who became an important bureaucrat for the new Chinese government, and herself became a celebrated painter.

Sister Seven disguised herself as a man so that she could join the Republican army. After the revolution, the government sent her to France to study how to set up an educational system for girls in China. Poh-poh, aged about six, went with her, because she had been entrusted to Sister Seven's care by her dying mother. She attended French schools, where her curious classmates asked what religion she was. "I am a freethinker," she answered proudly.

But while she was still in high school, her father died, and the family persuaded Sister Seven that the orphan child of the hero brother ought to take my grandmother's place in France. Her schooling abruptly ended, she went back to China — a severe blow to an intelligent teenager. Her family, wanting to keep up her French, put her in a school run by French nuns. Unfortunately,

## REMembering

this school was in Shanghai. Poh-poh spoke Fukuiese so she had to learn elementary Shanghaiese even though back in France she had been studying history, literature and science. Because she had received her education in French, it had become almost her mother tongue. The nuns were the only people with whom she could have stimulating conversations — indeed, almost the only people with whom she could have any conversations. Naturally they often talked to her of religion, and eventually she decided to become a Catholic.



Mary Fan Tchun-ai

Her family wasn't upset by her decision, but they asked her to put off her baptism until after she was married. They pointed out that it would be difficult to find her a Catholic man, but that it wouldn't matter if her husband weren't Catholic if she was baptized after the wedding. The nuns agreed with the family's advice; they hoped that Poh-poh might convert her husband.

Poh-poh agreed, and two of her sisters began looking for a husband for her. They eventually chose a bank officer named Huang Tschai. Her brother, who represented him in the negotiations, described him as a scholar returned from abroad. In fact he had studied for a while at a minor American college but had never earned a

degree. Moreover, he was ten years Poh-poh's senior, a widower with a son. But Poh-poh didn't learn all this until after they were married. Luckily he had no objections to Catholicism, and soon Poh-poh was received into the Church.

My grandfather was transferred to a different branch, and the Huangs moved to Canton — yet another dialect for Poh-poh to learn! My mother and uncle were born there. They lived in Canton until 1926, when my grandfather decided to move to the United States, where he had often travelled on business.

Though charming and affable, he was also rather impractical and shiftless. He forgot, or it didn't occur to him, to secure the proper travel documents for his wife and children, who had to spend weeks interned on Angel Island in the San Francisco Bay. The immigration officers were particularly reluctant to let Poh-poh into the U.S. because she had a weak lung due to tuberculosis, but finally they were all admitted.

Poh-poh began to learn English. Their life in the States was meagre in stark contrast to the comfort of the Fan family home in Fukien. For a while my grandfather worked as a Chinese-school teacher, then he tried a series of unprofitable business ventures. Poh-poh's immigrant status prevented her from getting proper employment so, despite her weak lung, she did menial household chores for white women. Later, when she got resident status, she became a clerk in a government office, but she still had to scrimp in order to make ends meet.

The nuns would have been proud of her. She knew it was useless to try to convert her husband, but she took her children to Mass every week. She was determined also that they would get the education of which she had been deprived, and she insisted in them a love of books. Eventually, they both entered graduate school: it was there, one Sunday after Mass, that my mother met my father.

With her children grown, Poh-poh had some time and money to spare and she enrolled in night classes in Russian. Her son complained that she had chosen a useless language. She retorted that she studied for the pleasure of using her brain.

Now seventy-six, retired and widowed, she lives with her daughter's family in Montreal. She teaches French to Chinese immigrants and coaches them for their citizenship tests, reads voraciously, goes to the ballet, and listens to records. She still bitterly resents the termination of her education: she still has many thrifty habits; she still has a weak lung. And she is still a devout Catholic. OH

Letters continued from Page 3

I was, on the whole, very disappointed by the article, first by the unwarranted and misleading accusation that the OED was somehow racist or ethnocentric itself, and then by the thrust of the article which ignores many of the facts of the English programme at U of T. I had hoped to find better in *OtherWise*, both from its writers and editors. Yours sincerely, O. Harris

### CORRIER REPLIES:

In the Compact Edition of the *Oxford English Dictionary* complete text 1971; reprinted 1972, 1974, 1977, 1979, 23rd printing in the U.S. January 1984, the words "racism" and "ethnocentricity" do not appear. Of course the words exist in other dictionaries. The point is that the OED is the standard text for English students, and I am obviously being ironic in establishing connection between the "non-existence" of the words, according to the OED and the attitude of English departments towards world literature.

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